

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILY MEETINGS

SOME CORE VALUES OF FAMILY MEETINGS	ALL FAMILIES HAVE STRENGTHS	FAMILIES ARE THE EXPERTS ON THEMSELVES	FAMILIES DESERVE TO BE TREATED WITH DIGNITY AND RESPECT	FAMILIES CAN MAKE WELL- INFORMED DECISIONS ABOUT KEEPING THEIR CHILDREN SAFE WHEN SUPPORTED	WHEN FAMILIES ARE INVOLVED IN DECISION-MAKING, OUTCOMES CAN IMPROVE	A TEAM IS OFTEN MORE CAPABLE OF CREATIVE AND HIGH-QUALITY DECISION- MAKING THAN AN INDIVIDUAL
	CHARACTERISTICS SHARED BY ALL	(TDM) TEAM DECISION- MAKING	FAMILY GROUP DECISION-MAKING (FGDM)	FAMILY TEAM CONFERENCE (FTC)		
PURPOSE	To provide support to families at risk of or already involved with the child welfare system, in a strengths-based team setting which ensures child safety.	To make immediate decision regarding child's placement.	To develop a plan that ensures protection of child.	To develop a plan that ensures protection of child.		
GOAL OF MEETING	To make best possible plans by using a solution-focused team approach and ensuring family's voice is central.	Team, including family, seeks consensus decision regarding placement that protects child and preserves or reunifies family.	Family, with support of others, makes a plan for child to ensure safety and stabilize current crisis.	Family, using expertise and support of team members, develops plan to address needs and utilize strengths, at a variety of critical points.		
DISTINCTIVE ELEMENTS	Needs/strengths-focused Culturally appropriate Individualized plans developed Inclusive re: participants, with family input critical Linkages to continuing supports, both natural and traditional.	Held for EVERY placement-related decision faced by EVERY family served by the public child welfare agency.	Private family time Family traditions/culture emphasized	Family tells the "family story" Option to use for prevention purposes with families not yet involved with child welfare system.		
DECISION RESPONSIBILITY	Goal is to place family at center of decision-making; ultimately the assigned social worker must approve of plans made.	Agency maintains responsibility if consensus regarding placement issue cannot be achieved.	Family develops plan that protects child, sharing responsibility with agency.	Family determines outcome, except for identified non-negotiable issues.		

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SCHEDULING REQUIREMENT	Varies...	Mandatory —meeting held before any placement or re-placement occurs, or before any initial court hearing in cases of imminent risk removal.	Voluntary —meeting is held only with family’s approval and if scheduled by assigned worker or other involved person.	Voluntary —meeting is held only with family’s approval and if scheduled by family’s assigned worker or community worker.
REFERRAL	Varies...	Assigned social worker required to schedule when placement-related decision must be made.	Any professional involved with family may refer at any time.	Assigned social worker, family, or other team member may refer at any time.
PREPARATION	Preparing the family for the meeting is both respectful and important to positive outcomes.	Often limited preparation due to crisis nature of many placement decisions. Assigned social worker invites family and prepares them.	Emphasis on advance planning, often 20-30 hours total, over 3-4 week period. Coordinator invites and prepares family and others.	Assigned social worker or community worker has pre-meeting with family to determine goal/desired outcome, and to prepare family and identify team members.
TEAM MEMBERS	Birth parents and extended family, including non-relative supports as family chooses; child (as appropriate), service providers, assigned social worker, involved agency staff.	Also: Neighborhood or other community partner, child’s caregiver if already placed outside of family, facilitator who is deemed a team member. All who attend have either family’s permission or a right to participate as “treatment team” members.	Family decides on participants, with input from facilitator.	All family members are encouraged to attend, even if birth parents object.
FACILITATOR	Trained facilitator with strong strengths-based orientation and excellent group process skills.	Immediately accessible, full time agency staff member who, as team member, shares responsibility for quality decision. Same facilitator for family throughout their involvement with system.	Impartial facilitator, often coordinator of meeting who is responsible for pre-meeting preparation.	Trained agency staff, often the assigned social worker or community-based service provider.
LENGTH OF MEETING	Varies...	One to two hours	Three to five hours	Varies

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CONFIDENTIALITY	Privacy and respect are core values and set the tone for the meeting. New allegations of abuse/neglect must be reported.	Focus on privacy—family is told information may be used for case planning, or in court if necessary. Use of forms discouraged.	Signed agreement of confidentiality often used.	Signed confidentiality statement used.
POST MEETING RESPONSIBILITIES	Attention to post-meeting safety and emotional issues is part of the discussion. Follow up meetings are typical.	Assigned social worker primarily responsible to implement decision from meeting; other participants play supporting roles. Outcome data collected and used for self evaluation and planning.	Assigned social worker responsible to monitor and ensure plan is implemented.	Primary social worker or community person monitors individualized course of action (ICA) plan and makes adjustments if necessary.
USAGE	Growing! And complementary...a continuum of family meeting types provides the opportunity for best practice and positive outcomes.	TDM is a core strategy used in over 30 AECF Family to Family sites including Cleveland, Louisville, Detroit, Denver, and San Francisco.	Variations of FGDM in place in several hundred US sites and in Canada and Europe.	Community Partnership for Protecting Children Initiative sites including St. Louis, Jacksonville, Cedar Rapids and St. Louis.